PYRRHIC VICTORY

by

Sinead Baird

STEVEN BOOKS

PYRRHIC VICTORY

© Sinead Baird 1994

First edition 1994

ISBN 1-899435-01-8

Printed and Published by

Steven Books
10 Lincoln Way
Enfield
Middlesex EN1 1TE
England

Pyrrhic Victory

Donovan O'Casey stepped off the plane onto the red carpet and, for the first time in a decade and a half, felt the rock of beloved Erin beneath his feet. He was tempted to emulate the Pope, go down on both knees and kiss the tarmac, but even though the crowds which had turned out to greet him were every bit as impressive as those which had cheered the Pontiff three years earlier, he felt it wouldn't be quite right, after all, the Pope was a man of God, and however much he, Donovan O'Casey might be revered and held in esteem by his own people, there were those watching his triumphant homecoming to whom he was no better than a mass murderer, including, strangely, many of his own countrymen.

But it soon transpired that if there were any such misguided souls in Dublin, there were certainly none at the airport; his homecoming was cheered unanimously; there were no dissenters, no peace protesters, there was not even a solitary member of the Anti-IRA Standing Committee waving a Tricolor as there had been at every demonstration, event and shindig of the slightest political nature in Ireland these past seven years. Not that he knew anything about that, save what he'd heard second hand or read in the foreign press; he hadn't been home since 1985, more than fifteen years. A lot had happened since then.

Now, as he stepped off the plane and the first cheers bombarded his ears, a strange feeling of Gaelic pride welled up inside him, a feeling he hadn't felt since that night in October '84 when he'd gunned down four British soldiers in cold blood. It hadn't been quite like that of course, although that was the way the British always told it. True, they had been just as surprised as he was, but he had been outnumbered four to one by the elite of the occupying forces, and had accounted for every one of them. Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang! Five shots had rung out, and in less than ten seconds, three of them had been dead at his feet while the fourth had tried desperately to crawl away, a bullet lodged in his shattered spine. Then Donovan had calmly walked across to where his enemy lay, knelt over him and, taking the man's head in his hands, jerked it swiftly to

the right. The soldier's neck had been snapped instantly, and he had walked off cool as a cucumber into the Bogside night.

This, more than anything else had secured him his place in Republican folklore, indeed, he was very much a legend in his own lifetime: poems, songs and at least one novel had been written about him - and now, Donovan O'Casey, the greatest IRA hero of them all, was coming home.

All these long years he'd spent in exile, constantly changing his appearance, growing a beard, a moustache, dyeing his hair, it had all been worthwhile after all. He really had given up hope, almost. How many brave comrades had he lost? How many of the men he'd gone to school with, grown up with, had ended up in front of a British judge, sentenced to life imprisonment, or lying spread-eagled in a Belfast gutter with an SAS sniper's bullet through the back of the neck? He'd all but lost count, but it would be true to say that the best of his friends, the cream of the Irish youth he'd known and loved were no more.

But that was all in the past, now they were building for the future. Three months ago the last British soldier had boarded the final British Forces plane at Belfast Military Airport; three weeks ago Ireland had been united for the first time since 1921, and now, he was returning home in triumph. Here he was in Dublin, tomorrow he'd fly up to Belfast to be reunited with his sister for the first time in a decade and a half, and they'd celebrate like they'd never celebrated before, and like only the Irish could.

Donovan realised that although his name would be forever associated with the reunification, he had played only a very small, almost negligible part in bringing it about. He hadn't worked for the IRA since 1987, not in an active capacity, though he had of course supplied them with arms on an ad hoc basic, raised funds and publicised their cause whenever and wherever he could. Most of the time though had been spent playing hide and seek with the British secret service overseas; he'd been warned that a special three man team of undercover killers had been drafted to kill him. That had been as recently as '94, but when the campaign had been stepped up in '96, the British had had far more important fish to fry.

That had been the year of the Channel Tunnel; two thousand pounds of high explosives had been on that train, and seventeen hundred people had lost their lives. The outrage in the world press had lasted for weeks but, paradoxically, rather than allowing the British to portray them as inhuman fiends, the atrocity had strengthened the resolve of their foreign supporters, particularly

the Americans. The more Brits they killed, the more money the Yanks pumped into Noraid.

It had been the mass arrests after the Channel Tunnel bombing that had led to the final phase; the British had made a crass mistake by reintroducing internment, and by turning the SAS loose on the civilian population. Had they conducted an ordinary high profile police investigation the bombing could well have been a disaster for the IRA, but the random shootings, the police brutality and the violations of civil liberties had all served in a short time to generate more sympathy for the Provos.

Three months after the Channel Tunnel bombing, the assassination of the Queen followed immediately by the bombing of Oxford Circus underground station had been the straw that broke the camel's back. The British public had long since lost the stomach for the fight, so had the Army, although this could never be openly admitted. For the past few years it had been the politicians and the unelected gremlins of Whitehall, and only them, who had desperately wanted to continue; it was probably the fact that four MPs and a number of senior civil servants had been killed in the Oxford Circus blast that had tipped the balance.

Although it had still taken a year for them to come to the negotiating table and a further two years for the pact to be signed, the IRA godfathers had sensed victory as soon as Britain's Conservative Prime Minister had mentioned the possibility of talks. This had been unheard of; in the entire history of the troubles, no senior Conservative politician had even suggested it; their line had always been: We don't negotiate with murderers. Indeed, Cannon had uttered those very words himself less than a year before, then here he was, the British Prime Minister, proposing a dialogue with the IRA.

The motion hadn't been carried the first time, but it had only taken a couple more bombs to persuade any doubters to make up their minds, after that it had been inevitable, but of course, the British always liked both to drag things out with miles of red tape, and to try to salvage something. In this case there was very little they could do except a complete about face and try to pretend that they had been looking for a negotiated settlement for the past ten years.

Now it had finally happened, Ireland was both free and united; of course, there would still be a few problems to iron out, like the Protestant majority in the North, but they'd soon come round to accepting the new order, the common people always did, because basically they were like sheep, they needed leaders

to follow, and now, after three thousand deaths in the Province alone, they had them.

Donovan O'Casey had never been easily overwhelmed with euphoria, he'd experienced too many disappointments, let downs and near successes for that ever to happen. All the same, he had been caught up in all the hype ever since he boarded the plane in New York, and now that there could be no turning back, now that Ireland was actually united, and he was on his way home, it was difficult for him to be anything but euphoric. The first indication that something might not be quite right had been the comment of one of the customs men at the airport.

"You're Donovan O'Casey?" the man had asked him as he checked his passport.

"Yes."

"The Donovan O'Casey?"

"Well, yes."

"The IRA man?"

"Yes."

At this point he'd been feeling more than a little uneasy; perhaps the customs officer had relatives in Britain or had lost a friend in one of the London hotel bombings; many Americans had been killed in London over the past few years, not because they had been targeted intentionally, but simply because there were so many of them living there and visiting the capital. But any fears he'd had on that score, that perhaps he'd be stopped, body searched and fitted up with drugs or something, swiftly evaporated as the man seized his hand in a vice-like grip and pumped it with an enthusiasm and a warmth which O'Casey found overpowering. "Jesus! Now I can tell my children that I've shaken the hand that killed the oppressors of my countrymen."

"You're Irish?" he asked stupidly.

"Fifth generation, my family have been in this country since eighteen-eighty something, but an Irishman is an Irishman wherever he was born, wherever he lives."

"I'll second that," he said warmly, "what's your name?" "Conlon, Michael Conlon."

"Good to meet you, Michael Conlon."

"You're going back there now?" he said, "to Belfast?"

"Yes, as soon as I've met the Prime Minister in Dublin."

"I was there last year; you'd not recognise it now."
"It's still Ireland."
"Ireland? Oh no, Belfast is not Ireland."
"What is it then?" he replied a little tartly, "Britain?"
"What! No, not that, it's much worse than that."
O'Casey was puzzled, "What could be worse than that?" he asked.
"You don't know, do you?"
"No."
"You'll see when you get there."

At this point the man behind him in the queue coughed loudly and interrupted rudely, "If you don't mind, I've got a plane to catch."

That had been the end of their conversation; he'd wondered what the customs man had meant, for a time it had worried him, but once aboard the plane he had struck up a conversation with an elderly woman. She was returning home for the first time in over thirty years and he had quickly been immersed in her euphoria as she prattled on and on about the grandchild she had never seen, but she was such a lovely girl, a regular colleen. He hadn't heard that word for a long time. In fact at one point he hadn't heard English for a long time, because although he was flying in from New York, he had spent much of the time he was on the run from the British, fighting as a mercenary in Africa. He hadn't particularly liked the job, but it had paid well, and there weren't many things he could do except kill people, but what he did, he was good at.

After he'd met the Prime Minister of All-Ireland in the VIP lounge, he was quickly spirited off to a church hall about a mile and a half from the airport where a press conference had been convened. Donovan O'Casey had never liked the press, primarily because they had labelled him and his organisation murderers and used similar distasteful epithets. It had been the press more than any other institution which had persecuted the IRA for the past fifteen years, for as long as he had been a member, indeed for as long as he could remember, but there had been no idealistic or altruistic motive for the constant stream of invective and hatred which had been directed against them. Donovan realised that because these same journalists were always swift to heap praise on the ANC, and what scum they were.

In his early days with the Republican movement he had empathised with the so-called armed struggle in Southern Africa, indeed, the IRA had even worked with the ANC on occasion, but that was before they'd realised what these

murdering scum were really into. They had no idealism, they weren't fighting to liberate their country. When Donovan had read up on the history of South Africa, when he'd spoken to ex-patriat South Africans, he'd soon been put straight on that score. The entire black *liberation* movement was a joke, from top to bottom it was run by bourgeois liberals, black pseudo-intellectuals and, worst of all, by communist Jews.

Donovan had read quite a lot of conspiracy theory, from the *Protocols of Zion* to the sophisticated anti-UN propaganda which was churned out by certain American anti-communist publishing houses, and had never found any of it convincing, but there was no denying the fact that a certain type of Jew gained a great deal of satisfaction from promoting miscegenation and openly advocating the overthrow of any government which took the slightest stand against forced race-mixing. In this respect the press were inseparable from the Jews; many journalists were also Jewish, that fact had not escaped his notice either. Yet here they were: the enemies of both Irish Republicanism and white civilisation, queuing up to shake his hand, pumping him for information about his life on the run, and even offering him enormous sums of money for one exclusive after another.

Was it true that he had been the fifth man in the assassination of the Queen of England? Had it been he who had shipped in the Semtex for the Telecom Tower job? How well had he known Declan Brady, the IRA godfather who'd been assassinated by the SAS in Crete? It had been one of the most distasteful experiences of his life, but he'd have to get used to this sort of thing from now on; that was the price of fame.

Donovan checked out of his hotel at five pm the next evening and caught the six thirty flight to Belfast. There would be no hero's welcome for him here because he was travelling incognito. He'd spoken to Sandra on the phone last night; God, it must have been nearly seven years since he'd even heard her voice. What would she look like now, his kid sister? He couldn't wait to see her, to hold her in his arms, to kiss her precious head; they'd never been close when they were kids, but for them it hadn't been a case of out of sight out of mind, rather one of absence making the heart grow fonder. But first he had to go through customs again.

Although the flight was counted as a domestic one, now that Dublin and Belfast were part of the same country, it had been standard practice throughout the EEC for the past three years for all internal air travellers to go through a

customs check. It sounded silly really: even if you were flying from say London to Manchester in England, a mean distance of some two hundred miles, and a journey that could made just as quickly by rail, it was still obligatory. In fact, travelling any great distance by rail or using the British motorways or the German Autobahnen for example, all necessitated regular checks by police and internal customs. Random stops and even strip searches were common, routine in some areas: London and the Basque area of Spain to name but two.

This was the so-called Luxembourg Protocol which had been agreed in principle at a full meeting of the European Parliament in March 1996; it had been aimed specifically at the IRA, but with the triumph of the Provos there had been no suggestion that it be scrapped. Indeed, the first IRA member of Parliament had vigorously supported it as a necessary measure against the spread of international terrorism!

Donovan didn't have long to wait at internal customs; there had only been a handful of people on the flight. He was greeted by a Pakistani customs officer, at least, the man looked like a Pakistani, but he spoke with a heavy Belfast accent.

"Mr O'Casey?"

"Yes," said Donovan.

"Would you like to step this way please?"

"Is anything wrong?" he asked.

"Oh, no sir, but we were told by Special Branch that you didn't want any publicity. Family visit, I believe?"

The man smiled disarmingly, and Donovan followed him like an unsuspecting sheep. He led him down a dimly lit corridor while Donovan, suitcase in hand, wondered innocently if there was to be a surprise reception. His sister had said something about meeting him at the airport with her husband and two children: Duane and Donovan; she'd named the first child after their father, who'd been a famous Republican, and the second after him.

"I gather you haven't been here for a while sir," said the customs officer.

"No, not since I was your age," replied Donovan.

"Oh, I'm older than I look," he replied, "in any case, I'm a native, born and bred and it's changed a lot since I was a kid."

"Really?" said Donovan, "you surprise me."

"Yes sir," he said, innocently, "I'm thirty-one actually."

That hadn't been what Donovan had meant; what he had meant was that he wondered how this immigrant had the nerve to call himself a native.

"Where are you from?" he asked.

"Derry," he replied, "that's where my family are from, but I'm a Belfast man myself."

Donovan shook his head in disbelief, but before he could think of a suitable reply, the customs officer opened a side door and led him out into a small car park.

"Here we are, sir."

Donovan opened his mouth to speak, but caught his breath as a squeaky female voice called out his name.

"Donny! Donny!"

He looked across the car park and there she was, his kid sister, and she looked hardly a day older than she had on the eve of her nineteenth birthday, the last time he'd set eyes on her all those years ago.

"I'll leave you to be re-united then," the customs man said, "hope to see you again, Mr O'Casey; have a pleasant trip."

Smiling thoughtfully, the man closed the door on them and they were alone together. Donovan dropped his suitcase as Sandra rushed into his arms.

"Oh Donovan, Donovan darling, I thought I'd never see you again, never thought I would."

They hugged each other more like long lost lovers than brother and sister; he kissed her face and she wept tears of joy.

"Bejesus," he said, "you're still the same, still the same."

"I never thought I'd see you, never thought I would." she repeated. "Mick would have loved to come and meet you but he's working late; he's a doctor. You know."

Donovan O'Casey did indeed know; he'd heard all about his sister's family. Over the years he'd only had a handful of letters from her forwarded through several dead letter boxes, but they had been long ones and she'd kept him up to date with all the family developments including, sadly, the death of their father in '92 and of their mother two years later. She was the only family he had in the world now, her and her two boys, the nephews he had never seen.

"Where are they then?"

"Where's who?"

"Your sons, woman, my nephews!"

"Oh, Duane and Donny, I couldn't bring them with me, not through Cranston, besides, they're just getting over the flu."

Cranston was one of the new redevelopment zones, the last lingering legacy of British influence. In 1995 they had tried to bring new work to the Province, and several areas had been ear-marked for grandiose road building and property developing schemes, the so-called RDZs.

Nothing much had come of them, but in less than two years, the housing estates which had been built in association with them had quickly become notorious slums and hotbeds of social unrest. At least, that was what he had read in the British and Irish press, though he had never actually seen a photograph of them, not even one. Thinking of that momentarily made him realise he'd never seen a photograph of his nephews either.

"Hey, I can't wait to see them," he said, "what are they like, these boys of yours?"

"Oh you'll love them,"she said, "Duane is just like you."

"You should have called him Donovan then," he laughed.

"Oh Donny, I had to name the first one after Daddy, didn't I?"

"Yes," he said, suddenly a little sad, "I'll have to go up and see Dad. And Mum."

"They're together," she said, "and at peace."

They both smiled, grimly, as if in assonance.

"Hey, come on," he said, "there'll be plenty of time for nostalgia later; let's talk of the living now."

She nodded, "Yes, it's been so long though Donny, and I wish you could have seen Daddy before he died. And Mummy."

Her car was parked up against the far side wall; she took him by the hand and led him to it. There were so many things he wanted to ask her, both about Belfast and about her family, but he still felt drained after his long journey and the ordeal of the press conference. He'd been on the go for the best part of a week. As he climbed into the car he yawned; she turned to him and said, mockingly: "I hope you're not tired of me already?"

"Tired of running and hiding," he said.

She opened her car door, pausing to reply,"You don't have to run now, Donny, nor hide. You're home now."

That was true, he was home at last, after all these years. And he would stay here until the day he died, that was a promise. They drove off out of the customs officers' car park towards her home.

When they reached the perimeter they were flagged down by a pair of heavily armed Guarda. The older man held a submachine gun across his chest; the younger man, who Donovan thought was a curious looking fellow, drew his pistol and advanced towards the car, poking his head in the driver's window suspiciously.

"May I see you papers please, miss?" he asked, "and yours, sir?"

As he came up close, Donovan realised why the man looked so strange: he was Chinese. Well, maybe he wasn't Chinese exactly, but he was certainly an Oriental of some kind. He gave Donovan a typical, inscrutable Oriental look and said: "Welcome home, Mr O'Casey."

Donovan forced a smile; he was reaching for his wallet and passport when the man waved at Sandra and said: "It's all right Mrs Connor, we were told to expect you."

She smiled at him, "Thank you," she said.

The customs man nodded at Donovan, still giving him what Donovan took for a dirty look, but shrugging his shoulders he thought to himself: "It's just their way."

As they drove on, Sandra turned to him and said, "I'm glad I got special clearance, it can take ages for them to search your car."

"I wouldn't have thought there was any need for it now, or are the Protestants still restless?"

"Oh no," she said, "Ireland is one big happy family now, but you can never be too careful, can you?"

That was true enough, he thought, but said instead, "I never thought I'd ever see a Chinaman guarding an Irish airport; I thought they all worked in restaurants and takeaways."

He started to laugh, but she cut him up short, "Donny, that's not a nice thing to say, you being Irish and all. You know how the British have always portrayed us as thick micks."

"Yeah," he laughed again, "except we weren't so thick when we were givin' them hell, blowin' up their wonderful Queen and all."

"Donovan O'Casey!" she exclaimed with mock indignation, "you're quite incorrigible!" But she laughed with him.

She drove him through a maze of squalid back streets, because she didn't like driving on the main roads, she said; they were less likely to be stopped by a B-Squad if they stuck to side streets and minor roads. The B-Squads had

been introduced last year; they were an idea the new nationalist government had borrowed from the British. They were highly trained teams of special traffic police who were armed and could stop any vehicle anywhere at any time. They could also detain suspects without warrant for a reasonable time, which meant in practice until the detainee was able to satisfy them that he was neither a terrorist nor engaged in any criminal activity. Their introduction had been highly controversial and had provoked a storm of protest in the Dail, but eventually the security services had had their way.

"Hasn't changed much, Belfast," said Donovan, he resisted the temptation to say: "It still looks like a shithole." because he knew it would take time, lots of money and even more effort to restore it to the way it should be.

"There's a lot of work to be done, Donny," she said, reading his thoughts, "give it time."

He stared out of the window as they drove along at thirty miles an hour, and thought it so different from the way he remembered it. He began to think that perhaps his first impression had been wrong. It took a while for him to realise why, but slowly it dawned on him. He had of course never been to or through Cranston before; last time he'd been here this area had been totally undeveloped. Now it was built up, there were tower blocks, shops and factories, but though they were only a few years old, they looked for all the world as though they had been built in the 1930s. It was as if they had been transported back in time. This wasn't an area that had been run down; it had been destroyed, literally. And there was something else, something even more disturbing, sinister even.

As they passed the shops, he studied the names above them: the ones that were legible had names like Khan, Dar, Patel and Kumar. These were not Irish names. Many of the shops had signs above them which were written in a foreign language, not just a foreign language but hieroglyphics. He recognised it for what it was: Punjabi, Urdu or something similar from the Indian sub-continent. Why weren't there any Irish names? As Donovan O'Casey looked closer he noticed something else, something even more alarming. There were kids playing in the street, but they weren't Irish kids, they weren't even white. Some were Asian, some were Chinese, but most of them were black, but not just black, worse than that, half black.

"Do you come through here often, Sis?" he asked her.

"Not if I can help it; Michael doesn't like me going out at all, not on my own."
"I don't like this place," he said, "it doesn't feel right. "That's because you've been away so long," she answered philosophically, "you've become a stranger in your own house."

"I hope not," he said.

"Of course not, Donny," she reached over and pressed his arm, keeping her other hand firmly on the wheel.

"I don't know anyone," he said, "only you; all the people I knew are dead."

"You'll soon make new friends, you're a celebrity, a hero." She paused then continued, "Is that why you didn't want anyone to know you were coming home today?"

"I need time," he answered. "You'll have plenty of that, take it one day at a time."

He smiled weakly.

"Mick's dying to meet you," she said, "he would have come too but he's working late."

"I know," he said, "you told me. He's a doctor."

"And a mighty fine one too," she answered, "his Mum and Dad are ever so proud of him."

"Are they a local family?" he asked, "you never told me."

"No. Well, they are now. You'll like them; I thought I'd invite them round for the weekend."

"That sounds nice," he said.

They passed out of Cranston onto the main road and a few minutes later, entered the tree lined suburb where Sandra Connor had lived for the past four years. Donovan felt the sense of unease that had come over him in Cranston pass; this was a really nice area, his sister had done well for herself to live in such a place. She and her husband owned their own home outright too, no mortgage. He was looking forward to meeting Michael Connor; he wasn't looking forward to meeting other people though: he'd had enough of being a celebrity. Now that the struggle was finally over, he wanted only to become plain Donovan O'Casey, find himself a nice colleen and settle down, for in truth he didn't carry the burden of fame well, and neither was he getting any younger. As they drove up to the house, he nodded approvingly, "That's it?"

"That's it, Donny, Fairlawns."

"Fairlawns." he repeated.

"Michael's very proud of it."

"He must be very proud of you too," he said, "I'll bet Mamma was too; she always said you'd either marry a doctor or a lawyer."

"Did she?" asked Sandra.

"You know damn well she did!" he chided, "she used to tell you often enough."

"It's been such a long time, I forgot."

"Yes," he said, "nostalgia ain't what it used to be."

They both laughed.

"Will you open the gate for me?" she asked.

Smiling at his sister, he got out of the car and walked up to the gate. The house was a good thirty yards from the road, and as he looked up at it, he saw a figure in the window. Pausing, he stared at it curiously; it was a woman, he couldn't tell how old she was, except that she looked to be on the wrong side of fifty.

She was dressed in a strange outfit. He strained his eyes and realised the woman was wearing traditional Indian garb. What was she doing in his sister's house? As he walked back to the car, he asked Sandra. "Oh, that's Mrs Sharma," she replied.

"Mrs Sharma?"

"The babysitter! Can't leave the boys on their own, can I?"

"No, I suppose not," he answered.

He almost asked her about Mrs Sharma, was she an Indian? But he figured that would be something of an academic question; he'd meet her in a couple of minutes anyway. Funny, he thought to himself, there hadn't been that many Indians here when he'd last been home. Unlike the Mainland, that had been infested with them even then; now, he'd heard, they were buying up all the businesses, not just the corner shops as they had in the seventies and eighties, but all the wholesalers, manufacturers, banks...you name it, the Asians were buying it.

He'd heard that from an Englishman, a tourist he'd met in Florida. Well, he'd gone there as a tourist, but he'd decided not to return home because he couldn't stand the thought of what was happening to his country. It was being turned into a multi-racial Marxist slum, he'd said. And that was under a Tory government.

Donovan remembered that at one time the Tories had been very anti-immigration, but over the past few years even they had become terrified of being

branded racists, and as a result, more and more immigrants had come flooding into the country. Race was a taboo subject on the Mainland. Mainland, he thought, almost out loud. Why was he thinking of Britain as the Mainland? It was a foreign country; Ireland was united now, one nation and one race under God. Except for the middle aged Indian woman in his sister's living room, and the Paki kids and half-chits he'd seen playing on the streets of Cranston, he thought dolefully.

He thought again of that English tourist in Florida and wondered if the man would be any happier living there. It was certainly much warmer than England, but neither Florida nor the rest of the United States was any better than Britain in racial terms. In Britain there were more Indians than any other minorities; in the States it was the blacks who were breeding like rabbits, except on the West Coast where the Chicanos had long been the dominant minority, and Florida where the Cubans and Haitians were taking over. While in New York even the Jews were being driven out, principally by the Puerto Ricans, so there weren't that many places left for white Americans. Still, at least Ireland hadn't succumbed to the rising tide of colour. Except for the middle aged Indian woman in his sister's sitting room he thought dolefully.

Sandra drove up to the house and parked the car in the drive while Donovan closed the gate behind her and walked up. He shook his head in disbelief; his kid sister had changed so much over the years; when they were kids she'd hated blacks, and detested Asians. He on the other hand had been ultra-liberal as long as he wasn't discussing Sectarian politics, and had rebuked Sandra no end of times for making racially derisive remarks.

And in some respects he hadn't changed; he'd spent a long time in Africa, and although he'd never swallowed any of that racial equality bullshit, he had come to like and admire Africans. They were an unsophisticated people but, when met on their own ground, in the bush or the villages away from the concrete jungle, the white man's domain, they had many admirable qualities. The big mistake was taking the African out of the bush and expecting him to live and behave like a European. Donovan hadn't met that many Asians; they were nowhere near as primitive as Africans, and boasted a culture of sorts going back thousands of years to the ancient Aryans, but they didn't belong in Europe, much less in Ireland. And he certainly didn't want them in his sister's house babysitting his nephews. Mrs Sharma came out to meet them and smiled warmly at Donovan.

"Hello Mrs Connor, " she said, "the boys are anxious to meet their uncle." She smiled again at Donovan, flashing an inviting but stained set of teeth at the returning hero. Donovan smiled weakly, "I can't wait to meet them either."

"You are very big hero in our country," she said.

"India?" he asked stupidly.

She laughed, "Mrs Connor said you did not want anyone to know you are here for a few days, so I have told no one, not even my husband that you are coming. But we hope that when you have settled in we will be pleased to throw a party in your honour."Again she smiled; in spite of her curious syntax she spoke English very well; she had probably been here since the sixties, Donovan thought.

"Do you want me anymore tonight, Mrs Connor?" she asked.

"Oh no, you'd better let me ring for a taxi; it's getting dark."

"Thank you."

They went into the house and Donovan, feeling very much the odd-man-out, admired the china ducks on his sister's wall. The phone was on a low table just inside the hall; Sandra picked up the receiver and dialled for a taxi.

Looking up at her brother, she smiled and said to the Indian woman, "Mrs Sharma, take Donny into the kitchen and make him a cup of coffee or something." Then to Donovan, "Be with you in a minute, dear."

Donovan followed her into the kitchen, "It is so good to have you with us," she said pleasantly, "all the suffering and hardship have been worthwhile now that the infernal British have gone."

Donovan was surprised to hear her talk like this, then a thought occurred to him, "Are you a Catholic?" he asked.

"She laughed, "No, I am Hindu, but we Irish must stick together."

Donovan couldn't believe what he had heard, "We Irish?" what was she talking about, "We Irish?"

In the kitchen she asked him if he would prefer tea or coffee and he said coffee would be fine. Then she continued, "You know, there is so much trouble in the world, Mr O'Casey, and in Ireland; only last Thursday there was a riot in Derry and twelve people were killed."

"Protestants or Catholics?" he asked.

"Oh no, not Sectarian; there was a group of black boys arrested by the police and it started a riot."

"Blacks?" Donovan asked.

"Oh yes, but it was not racism; Ireland you know is a very tolerant country."

Which was probably the reason the Irish had been bombing the hell out of each other for the past thirty and more years, he thought. He said nothing.

"No, it was not racism, but sometimes the police can be very insensitive."

Race riots in Derry, Donovan thought, whatever next? Mrs Sharma made him a cup of coffee and then, excusing herself, went upstairs to check on the boys. Donovan walked out into the hall and then followed his sister into the living room.

"I wanted to let them stay up and meet you tonight," she said, but they're just getting over the flu and Mick said it's best if they take it easy for a few days."

"Yes, you said. Doctor's orders," he laughed. She laughed too, "I suppose so; you'll like Mick, he's been wanting to meet you since our first date."

"Where did you meet him?" Donovan asked, "you never did tell me." "In the supermarket of all places," she said, "I suppose it would have been more romantic if I'd met him in hospital, but that's life."

When Mrs Sharma returned they talked about trivialities until a car horn sounded in the road outside.

"That'll be your cab," said Sandra.

The Indian woman bade them both good night then walked out to the waiting car. Donovan O'Casey sprawled out over his sister's settee and threw his head back closing his eyes tightly. "It's going to take a lot of getting used to," he said, "especially after the jungle."

"Tell me about Africa, Donny," she said.

Sandra Connor had heard all about her brother's adventures in the dark continent, how he had fought for the Free Uganda Movement against that country's latest despot, Big Brother Tgula who had the reputation in the West of being the second coming of Idi Amin. But Donovan didn't want to talk about Tgula, nor Tshombe, nor Africa itself. Although he'd spent most of his exile there, it hadn't been from choice, he had been a mercenary pure and simple. True, there had been idealism at first, but when he saw what the African rulers were like, how they treated their own people, he had quickly gone off the whole distasteful business. Donovan looked at his sister and said, "Hey, I don't want to talk about fighting and killing anymore. Do you?"

She smiled and nodded her head then threw her arms around him. "You're right," she said, "look at that sky." She was looking out of the window as the sun went down; bright red streaks cut across the horizon just like he'd seen once

in the Arizona Desert when he'd been travelling in the States disguised as a tourist on his way to meet up with some West Coast Noraid supporters.

"Doesn't that make you feel good to be alive Donovan?"

"It does as that," he said, "sometimes I used to wonder if it was all worthwhile, but to see the sun go down on Erin like that, well, I don't have any doubts anymore."

He sat with her, looking through the family album, all the old photos of their father, mother and the estate where they had lived. He didn't remember the start of the troubles that well because he had very young at the time; Sandra was younger than him of course, so her recollections of such things were even more vague, where she remembered them at all.

After they had put the photographs away they talked, talked of trivialities which had once seemed so important, and of things which had seemed like trivialities at the time but which they now both held dear. Donovan was on his third cup of coffee when Sandra said, "I'd better go and look in on the boys."

"Hey, I haven't seen them yet," he said, "let me come."

"No," she said, "just in case they're awake; I want them to get a good night's sleep and then they should be over this bug in the morning."

He shrugged his shoulders, then she added, "Bejesus! I haven't shown you our family album. How thoughtless of me." She walked over to the sideboard and took out a big leatherbound volume, "Here Donny, have a look through this then we'll go through it together. Mick'll be home soon anyway."

She left the room, and Donovan opened his sister's family album. With the thoroughness which he vaguely remembered was typical of her, he noticed that the album was indexed. Page 14: wedding photos. Page 26: Donovan's first birthday party. Ah, here it was, Page 37: All four of us. He smiled to himself then turned to page 37 and the smile was instantly wiped off his face. He sat up with a start: this wasn't Sandra's husband, surely? He opened his mouth to say something under his breath, then the door bell rang. Jumping up, he threw the album down onto the settee and rushed out into the hall.

At the same time, Sandra came running down the stairs and they almost collided."I'll get it!" they exclaimed in unison; she laughed, but Donovan pushed her roughly aside and rushed to the door. Sandra was taken aback, but he had already thrown the door open and stood eye to eye with Michael Connor.

"What a day I've..." he began, then broke off. The two men studied each other's features, Donovan with disbelief, Sandra's husband with curiosity. It was he who spoke first, "Well, you must be Donovan." "Must be?" he laughed,

"I recognise you from your photograph. Sandra's kept it on her bedside table since the day we got married. Welcome home Donny."He threw his arms around Donovan and hugged him like a bear.

Donovan stood like a man in a trance; how he got through the next half hour without collapsing or doing something foolish he wasn't able to fathom. Dr Michael Connor had had a rough day, but not as rough as he, Donovan O'Casey. The reason he'd rung the door bell was because he'd left his keys at the hospital; earlier that day his car had broken down, so he'd have to borrow Sandra's tomorrow, that was if he went in. He'd be on stand-by; the way things were at the moment he could be called in at any time, but he wanted to meet his famous brother-in-law and spend some time with him and his own wife and children.

He also wanted Donovan to meet his own father, "My Dad's been a lifelong admirer of yours," he said, "he's told all our family about you; all my cousins know about Donovan O'Casey, and they're really proud that their cousin is married to his sister."

Donovan grinned sheepishly; he looked at Sandra and she smiled back at him. He searched her face for some trace of recognition, but all he could see was a far away, vacant look. She really didn't know what she had done, she had not the faintest idea. How could he tell her? Michael was sitting on the settee holding a large glass of whiskey in his right hand; "I'll have to take you to India some day," he said. Sandra laughed, "Don't you listen to him, Donny, he's been promising to take me there ever since we got married."

"No, seriously," he said, "we can go after Christmas. You don't want to spend another winter here like the last one, do ya?" Sandra tugged at her husband's thick, black beard until he yelped,

"Ow!"

"I told you before not to embarrass me in front of folk," she said with mock spitefulness. They were obviously playing some sort of game, one they'd played many times before.

Michael Connor pulled himself up, which was no mean feat as his wife was doing her best to pin him down, "Hey, Donovan's not folk, he's family." He

managed to stand up, despite her, drained the last of his whiskey in a single gulp, and walked across to the drinks cabinet,

"Are you sure you won't have one, Donny?" Donny he thought, this alien was not only married to his sister but was calling him Donny! "No," he said, "I told you, I never touch the stuff."

"Of course," said Michael Connor, straightening his turban with one hand and trying to refill his glass with the other, "they've always frowned on that in the Movement, haven't they? I suppose I should know better seeing what it does to people, and me being a doctor and all, but just because it's a fearful master doesn't mean it can't be a useful slave now and then."

Now he was misquoting George Washington; please God, don't let him start on Gerry Adams too! Donovan looked at his watch, it was turned midnight yet when he walked over to the curtains and drew back the thick velvet it still looked light outside; it was the moon. He looked up at it and shook his head in disbelief. What was he going to do? He couldn't stay here, not in this house, not with his sister sleeping in the same bed with this Paddy-by-proxy knocking back Irish whiskey, singing the praise of the IRA and telling what a splendid fellow he, Donovan O'Casey was. He hadn't met his sister's offspring yet either; how could he? He wouldn't be able to hide his revulsion. He'd have to leave soon, now, he'd have to make some excuse, leave the house tonight and find a hotel where he could hole up for a few days while he thought things out. That was what he needed, time to think. He'd have to take Sandra aside now and tell her he couldn't stay here tonight. She'd want to know why of course, she had been so brainwashed that she would never be able to work out the reason for herself, but he would have to leave and leave now. Or at least before she introduced him to her picaninnies as Uncle Donny.

He was just about to take Sandra aside when there was a thumping sound from the hallway just outside the living room door. Michael turned towards the door, Sandra sat up on the settee and Donovan instinctively reached for the gun he no longer carried in the shoulder holster he no longer wore. The door opened and in walked Duane and Donovan Connor in their dressing gowns and slippers.

Sandra stood up at once and scowled at them, "You! I told you..." she began, but Michael cut in and both boys started talking at once. They were bleary-eyed and looked like they'd just woken up.

"It was him..." they said in unison.

"Hey kids, come and meet your Uncle Donovan!" said Michael, walking over to the youngest one and sweeping him off his feet. Sandra was trying to tick them off, but Michael carried his youngest son over to his long lost Uncle and dumped him triumphantly on his lap, "Here he is, Donny, your namesake. Look, he's even got your eyes."

Sandra walked over to Duane and began scolding him, saying something about their having just got over the flu and how he had deliberately disobeyed her, but Michael cut in harshly, "Hush woman! They want to meet their Uncle Donny."

"Hello Uncle Donny," said the brown eyed, brown skinned creature on Donovan's lap, then threw his arms around Donovan's neck and kissed him. "Welcome to Erin."

He sat in the departure lounge, his case on the seat beside him, his head in his hands. He'd spent the last two days and nights walking the streets of Belfast, or of what had once been Belfast but was now more like Calcutta. Surely it hadn't been like this before? He wracked his brains trying to remember what it had been like, he wasn't sure, but one thing he was sure of was that it hadn't been like this.

He thought of his sister, his lovely kid sister; she had been lovely once, but she wasn't anymore. Now Donovan didn't know what to make of her; she didn't realise the enormity of what she had done; none of them did. For the past 48 hours he had been scouring all the old IRA haunts, the drinking dens and bars, and everywhere was the same. He saw white girls, lovely Irish colleens staring dreamy-eyed into Dark, alien faces. Where before they would have been taking up with Erin's finest stock: the McGuigans, the McShanes and the O'Reillys, now they had become the whores of Dar, Khan, Patel and any of a dozen other weird and not-so-wonderful surnames from the sub-continent and from darkest Africa. And, what was even worse, Irish men didn't seem to realise that something terrible was happening to their womenfolk; it was as though they had all been brainwashed, like his kid sister.

Donovan cast his mind back to the argument. Somehow he'd managed to hold his tongue in the presence of Sandra's husband; the following day the inappropriately named Dr Michael Connor had gone off to work at the hospital and he had been left alone with Sandra and the boys. She had realised that something was wrong, but she had simply dismissed it. When she'd told Michael he'd laughed and put it down to culture shock. "Sandra, the guy's been

on the run for fifteen years; you can't expect him to just walk in through the front door and take up where he left off. He doesn't know anyone, not even you. Give him time."

"I suppose so," she said.

"Christ, if I'd been on the run all that time I'd have had a nervous breakdown, wouldn't you?"

"You're right again, as usual, Doctor."

Donovan remembered sitting across the breakfast table, staring into space like a zombie while they fired innumerable questions at him, all four of them, his sister, her husband and their mongrel offspring. And he had replied to each and every one of them with a shake of the head or a grunt. Then when Michael had left the house, she had really let herself go. "Oh Donny, it's so good to have you home; after all these years. You know I cried myself to sleep last night I was so happy. Mick says I'm a big softie. Oh Donny, I'm so happy, and so proud. We never gave up hope, after all those years we none of us ever gave up hope."

"Hope," he grunted.

It was bad for us as well you know, terrible. You can't imagine what it was like, what with internment and the neighbours being arrested and the police searching the house.

"They searched this house?" he grunted again.

"Oh no, when we were living in the other place; it wasn't Mick they were after, although they were suspicious of him because he's very patriotic..."

She'd just gone on and on like that: her husband was very patriotic; Donovan O'Casey tried to visualise his brother-in-law waving a Tricolor, but somehow he couldn't reconcile it with his turban. Then she had thrown her arms around his shoulders and hugged him like the long-lost brother he was. "Oh Donny, I know I keep repeating myself, but you're home. I still can't believe it."

He tensed involuntarily; the thought of her sleeping with this alien and then touching him made his flesh creep. She was still babbling like a macaw; he felt like putting his hands round her throat and slowly squeezing the breath out of her body. Donny, you realise what this means, darling? We've won! We've finally won."

"Won?" he asked, "what have we won?"

She had worked herself up into such a state that she didn't detect the warning tone of his voice.

"The war that's what we've won, the war."

"Won? We haven't won anything."

She eyed him curiously,"Of course we have, Donny darling. What do you mean?"

He shook his head in disbelief and nearly shouted, "God woman, look at your children!"

"Duane and Donovan," she said, totally missing the point, "but they're free now Donny, they'll grow up as free Irishmen."

"Irishmen?" he couldn't believe this; "How can they be Irishmen?"

She stared at him blankly then a thought entered her head, "They'll never come back, Donny, the British have gone for good."

He'd tried to explain but she just didn't seem to be capable of taking it in. "Don't you understand woman, we haven't won anything."

"Donny, that's silly talk; they won't come back, the British."

"It's not the British; what do you think will happen now; what would Papa say?"

"He'd be over the moon, Donny, you know he would."

"Not about the withdrawal; you, and...and Mick?" he had to force himself to say the word, Mick, the guy was a darker shade of brown, sported a thick, black beard and wore a turban. What was his name: Gurjit Singh? Prakash? Kumar? No, it was Mick! The whole situation was so totally unreal that he wanted to pinch himself because he was obviously dreaming, except that this was a nightmare he would never wake up from.

"He'd been thrilled; it wasn't only Mummy who wanted me to marry a doctor." "But he's not just a doctor: he's..." he tailed off.

"He's what?" she said, still wide-eyed and innocent.

"He's not Irish."

She laughed, "But of course he's Irish, he's as Irish as me. And you!" she added, not the least bit offended, and still not even aware of what he was trying to say.

"But Sandra, he's not even white."

"Not what, Donny?"

"White, he's not white, and neither are your sons."

She stared at him, "So." It was a matter-of-fact so.

"Don't you understand, woman?

Is that what we fought the British for?"

"I don't understand, Donny, what has fighting the British got to do with Mick?"

"Good God, woman, I didn't fight the British for him; I fought them for you, at least I thought I did. You and all the colleens like you. But not for you to marry a ..." he groped around desperately to find the most euphemistic word he could think of, "...an alien."

"Alien?" she asked, obviously believing that aliens came from outer space.

"A Paki!"

She bit her lip and the blood drained from her face; her voice was shocked and low as she replied, "Donovan, that's racism."

He stared at his sister for a full half minute; she returned his stare, neither of them knowing what to say. Suddenly he realised there was nothing he could say; his sweet little kid sister had become a brainwashed moron, the whore of a refugee from the sub-continent. He left soon after that, packing his suitcase and letting himself out of the back door while Sandra sat in the living room as if in a state of shock.

He'd thought nothing worse could happen, but he'd been wrong on that score. After leaving his sister's house he hadn't known what to do or where to go. Indeed, he didn't know that there was anywhere to go, or anything to do. He'd checked into a small hotel just off the Falls Road; the male receptionist asked him for some proof of identity, and Donovan had shown him his passport.

"Donovan O'Casey," the man said in a thick Pakistani accent; "this is an American passport."

"Yes," replied Donovan.

"But you are not American," the man stated. Donovan felt like screaming at him, "And you're not Irish!" but simply shook his head. "Why have you got an American passport if you're not American?" the man asked, liked the stereotyped Paki he was.

"It's a long story; I'll have an Irish passport next week," he said, knowing full well he wouldn't.

"Are you registered with the police as an alien?"

This was too much, "Are you?" Donovan threw back at him.

The man grunted, fished under the counter for a set of keys and showed Donovan up to his room without another word. The room was quite pleasant except that it stank of curry. Donovan was surprised that the room was so

habitable; he'd had a number of surprises since his return, none of them pleasant.

"If you are staying more than two days I have to inform the police," the man said, "it is the law since we got independence."

"We?" Donovan asked, reaching for his wallet.

"From the oppression of Blitish tyranny," the man replied, missing the point." "Oh yes, they're terrible, aren't they, the Blitish," Donovan mimicked.

"Bastards!" the man said. He spat in disgust.

Now, three days later, Donovan sat in the lounge at the airport, unshaven, unwashed, with a one-way ticket to nowheresville in his hand and a look of perplexed disbelief on his face. He'd spent the best part of a day in the cells before they'd satisfied themselves that he was who he said he was. When they'd picked him up wandering the street, he'd been so drunk it had taken four of them to load him into the van. He'd nearly been charged with assault but the officer in charge of the station, an old guard Protestant, had accepted his explanation that he hadn't recognised the arresting officers, who had been in plain clothes, and had thought they were going to roll him. It had been an understandable error, after all, two of them were black.

"We call it mugging over here," he said.

Later, when Donovan had been banged up, the inspector had come into his cell by himself, and, pulling the door closed behind him, said,

"You'll be on your way in a couple of hours; your ID checks out."

"You haven't contacted my sister?" he asked anxiously.

The inspector shook his head, "Like you said."

"Thanks."

"Your family problems are nothing to do with us; as far as I'm concerned you can carry on killing each other." He stared at Donovan and his eyes were hard. Donovan had the distinct impression that this was going to turn nasty, but he was in no position and no state to offer any but a token resistance. The police were still largely Protestant of course, and they had suffered more than any other group during the troubles. They were a tightly knit, almost incestuous community: who knew how many of this man's relatives had been murdered by the IRA?

"So you're Donovan O'Casey, the Donovan O'Casey."

Donovan returned the man's stare but said nothing.

"They've written plays about you."

"I've heard."

"Well, now you've got your United Ireland, Mr O'Casey, what do you think of it? Was it worth all the blood you and your friends spilled."

"It had to be done," Donovan replied.

"Had to?"

"Ireland had to be free."

"Oh yes, Ireland had to be free, and now it is free, right."

"Yes."

The inspector unbuttoned his jacket, pulled out his service pistol and jabbed Donovan in the ribs with it. "I'll tell you how free it is: it's so free that I can shoot you now, file a report that you tried to escape while in custody, and Donovan O'Casey or no Donovan O'Casey, that'll be the end of it. There'll be a hullabaloo in the press for a week or two, then the following week I can go and shoot another suspect. As long as he's a Catholic or a Protestant and not a Paki. They don't like us shootin' Pakis, it upsets the Equality Councils.

"It's so free that you can't walk anywhere without being stopped in the street by me or someone like me and being searched, checked out, possibly detained for questioning up to five days and being required to account for your movements over the last three months, having your bank account checked out, your political affiliations and half a dozen other things.

"It's so free that you can't hire anyone you want unless you fill out an employment certificate and file it with the Bureau of Fair Employment so that if you take on too many Catholics or Protestants they'll send their inspectors round and make you take on half a dozen niggers instead. That's how free it is, Ireland, this is what you were killing your own countrymen for."

"Are you going to kill me?" Donovan asked.

The man still had the gun pointed towards his rib cage; he withdrew it, stood up, and walked out of the cell. Slamming the door behind him, he opened the hatch and shouted through it: "Welcome to United Ireland, Mr O'Casey. Welcome to freedom!"

That was the last he ever saw of the inspector; a couple of hours later, a half-caste sergeant opened the cell door and said, "Come on Donovan, time for you to go."He roused himself from his uneasy sleep and stared up at the man. "What time is it?" he asked.

"Time for you to go home."

"Home?"

"Or wherever you want. Come on, let's collect your gear."

Donovan followed him into the reception area where his property lay waiting for him. "It's all here, if you wanna check it and sign for it."

"You've been to the hotel?"

"Of course, we have to check out people like you: freedom fighters an' all that."

"There were three other officers present, one of them white, one black as the ace of spades, and the third a Sikh wearing a turban on which was mounted his police badge.

Donovan may have been a hero at the airport, but he certainly wasn't here: the police hardly glanced at him and gave him short shrift as soon as he'd collected his gear. This was only to be expected, he thought, considering how many of them had been murdered by the IRA.

Except that they hadn't been murdered, Donovan told himself; it had been a war they'd been fighting, and in all wars there are many unfortunate and regrettable deaths.

He got up and walked over to the cafeteria where a young African girl with tribal scars on both cheeks took his order for coffee. She smiled at him, a genuinely friendly smile as she asked in poor English, "Black or white?"

That was the sixty-four million dollar question, he thought, and he had to admit that he didn't know anymore, he was too confused. "Milk please," he replied.

The cafeteria was empty except for a middle aged Indian woman in traditional grab and an African couple who were sitting in the far corner arguing in some incomprehensible tongue. Donovan shook his head in disbelief for the tenth time; where were all the white faces? He hadn't seen a colleen since he'd arrived here: it was all blacks, Indians and half-chits. Even the RUC seemed to be made up of a mulatto mix.

He thought back to the night prior to his arrest. He'd spent hours walking the streets of Belfast, and everywhere it had been the same.

Was this what they'd driven the British out for? Was this why they'd spilled the blood of so many of their countrymen, why so many of Ireland's finest had been cut down in their youth or locked up for the best years of their lives? He wondered, and the more he wondered, the less he understood.

There was a hold-up at customs: an elderly woman with a metal plate implanted in her thigh set off the alarm, and security staff and police came

running from all directions. In less than half a minute the place was crowded with men in dark blue, grey and black uniforms shouting orders at the travelling public and at each other.

When they realised what had happened, a wave of mirthless laughter swept over the departure lounge and a fresh faced young security officer turned to Donovan and said, "She's done that before: we thought it was bloody Arabs last time."

"You get Arabs coming through here?" he asked.

"All sorts now," the youth replied, "some of them are worse than the bleedin' British."

He gave his hand luggage to the man on the X-ray machine and looked at him questioningly, "Just go through the gate, sir. Your bags will be put aboard for you."

"Don't I take them with me?"

"Not since Monday," the man replied, "new regulations."

He nodded sombrely and walked towards the gate; suddenly, he heard a familiar, squeaky voice calling his name as if from afar.

"Donny! Donny, wait!"

He turned around and there she was, his sister, she had a look of urgency in her face, and she was dragging her turbanned husband along behind her.

"Donny, don't go, darling, please, don't go."

Donovan turned back to one of the security officers, a look of confusion on his face.

The man said, "Plenty of time to say your goodbyes, sir. The plane's not ready yet."

Donovan looked back at Sandra; he didn't know what to do. They caught up with him at the desk.

"Donny," she said, "we've been looking all over for you. We contacted the police and they said you'd been picked up drunk and held on suspicion of being an illegal immigrant."

There was a bitter-sweet irony there, but he wasn't in the mood for laughter. He stood silent; Mick spoke first. "Donovan, come home.

We know you've been under pressure; you've been away so long - everything must seem strange, but you'll get used to it."

Get used to what, he thought: his kid sister married to a Sikh; his nephews growing up calling themselves Irishmen yet brown as rotten apples?

"It's too late," he said.
"What's too late, Donny?" asked Sandra.
"It's too late for Ireland."
"Don't be silly darling, this is only the beginning: a new beginning."
"It's too late: it's the end."

Mick moved in front of Sandra, smiled through his beard and addressed him man to man, "Look, Donovan, I know how you must feel, believe me. When he first came to this country, my father felt exactly the same way. But you've got to understand that the age of Imperialism has gone. Now that the infernal British have been driven out we've got to build a new Ireland, all of us. Now I know this..." he tugged at his beard and indicated his turban in turn "...well, it all seems strange to you, alien, disconcerting, but I've studied psychology, and believe me, it's only a silly prejudice, hostility to an outgroup.

You think I've invaded your territorial space so you're hostile, you'll get over it. What you've got to understand is we're all Irishmen now."

He stepped forward and touched Donovan on the shoulder. "It'll take time, that's all."

"Time?" asked Donovan, "how much time did it take to make an Irishman?"

"Donny," Sandra was speaking now, "we want you to come and live with us; we want us all to be one big happy family."

He shook his head sadly, "I have to go," he said, "I'll miss my flight."

He turned away. "Donny, where are you going? Where will you go?"

He turned and looked her in the eye, "I don't know, but I can't stay here. It's too late." He signalled to the security officer that he was ready and walked through the gate and out of Ireland for the final time.

"Donny, please come back, darling. Please, for me."

Her voice was pleading, but Mick turned to his wife, clasped her shoulder and said, "Let him go, Sandra; he doesn't belong with us."

"Donny, please."

"Leave him," her husband said, then, looking her in the eye said, "He's not your brother any more: he's a racist."

Donovan didn't know where he would go, but he couldn't stay here, that was for certain; another twenty minutes and he'd be out of Ireland for good, or would he? As Donovan boarded the plane, a customs officer came running up to him and called, "Excuse me sir, are you Mr O'Casey?"

He turned to the man; he had an Irish accent, but he was yet another half-chit. Donovan shook his head in disbelief; the officer misread this as the answer to his question.

"You're not Mr O'Casey?"

"Oh yes," said Donovan. 'Now what was the matter?' He'd already been arrested once; surely they didn't want to question him again. He wanted just to get out of here, preferably on this flight: ASAP.

"I thought you were," the officer said, "you dropped this." He handed Donovan his wallet.

Stupidly he felt in his inside pocket, then held out his hand for it. "Thank you," he said.

"Any time."

Donovan turned back to the aircraft steps, but as he did so the man spoke again. "Excuse me, but aren't you THE 'Donovan Casey ?'"

"Yes," Donovan turned back to him.

"Didn't you fly in the other day?"

"Yes."

"I heard something about that from a friend of mine in the RUC."

"Oh."

"Yeah, Catholic, he is, they employ Catholics now."

'They always had,' thought Donovan, he'd shot one of them once, but he could hardly tell this fellow that.

"Yes, I know," he replied

"So where you goin' now then?"

"I don't know."

"When you comin' back?"

"I don't know," he lied; he wanted to get aboard the plane and get out of here. "Well, just between the two of us, Mr O'Casey, don't. I've 'eard all about you; me Mum told me."

"She did?"

"Yeah, you an' all the other IRA godfathers, living it up in the States and all over the world while the soldiers on the street did all the dirty work." He was referring here to the soldiers of the IRA, not to the British Army.

"Your mother told you that?" said Donovan,"she's Irish?"

"*She* is, but why you should take all the credit for the Unification, you an' your kind, I don't know. You think you can just turn up like that after ten or fifteen years and hog the limelight. We don't need your sort here, not now."

This was the final insult; the guy was a half-caste, and here he was telling Donovan that he was not wanted, implying that he was a shirker or a fly-by-night. He climbed aboard the plane, dumb-struck, almost in a state of shock.

Donovan sat in the departure lounge at Paris International Airport, his mind in turmoil. He was trying to read the newspaper he'd bought at the terminal, but he just couldn't concentrate. There was an article in it about a riot in Limerick. Funny, he thought it had been Derry: no, it was definitely Limerick. That meant it must be yet another one. The Chief Rabbi of Ireland had appealed for calm; apparently a policeman had been stabbed to death after he'd called a youth an offensive name: the implication was that it was 'nigger'. The churches had got in on the act too; there was a lot of unreadable guff about racial tolerance and building a new Ireland, justice and equal opportunity for all. Donovan knew what that meant, he thought sarcastically: giving a Sikh the opportunity to marry your sister. He threw the paper down in disgust.

He'd have to make up his mind soon where he was going. He couldn't stay here; he spoke passable French, but he'd been advised that if he were to spend any time in France there would be trouble with the authorities. Since the poison wine scandal of '97, the French had gone out of their way to appease the British, and one thing London had made abundantly clear to President Jarre was that they didn't want anyone with IRA connections putting down roots in French soil.

Donovan looked across at the man in the grey trench coat; he was obviously a French secret service agent, they stuck out a mile. The man turned away trying desperately not to give him the impression that he was watching his every move. Then two British soldiers appeared out of nowhere and sat down next to Donovan. He took one glance at their uniforms and his heart leapt into his throat. Thrusting his hand into his pocket he realised too late that he wasn't armed: how could he be? This was stupid. He looked across at the secret service man, but the man turned away, got up and walked over to the kiosk, ostensibly to buy a newspaper. The two soldiers were far from spring chickens: one was a major, the other a sergeant, and although they were in full uniform they had a relaxed air about them. Donovan shook his head, of course it wasn't a set up, not even the British were that stupid. He looked at his watch, eleven fifty-eight;

he still had the best part of an hour in which to make up his mind. The two soldiers were talking, and out of idle curiosity rather than anything else, Donovan strained his ears to listen to what they were saying.

"How long were you in the Falklands, sir?" asked the sergeant of the major.

"Right from the start of the conflict, before that I was in Germany, then I did three tours in Northern Ireland."

"Three?" said the subaltern in awe.

"Yes, not to be recommended, but I didn't have a lot of choice. You were never there, I gather?"

"Fortunately no."

The major shook his head, "They were bastards them micks; kill, kill, kill, that's all they ever understood, there was no reasoning with them, just kill, kill, kill."

"I suppose it was inevitable that the government would sell out eventually, sir?"

"Whitehall? Yes. Totally spineless of course; it was when they bombed the Underground that time, that was what made them cave in. Didn't care a toss how many of us were done in, but as soon as the IRA started killing bureaucrats they had second thoughts. It's the bureaucrats who really run the country, see, the civil servants, not the politicians, they're just sheep, they only do what they're told."

"Do you think we could have won if they'd given us carte blanche?"

The major pursed his lips and thought deeply, "Well, I certainly think we could have wiped the bastards out, but whether we'd have won in any meaningful sense of the word...I doubt it. We'd have to have killed ever able-bodied Irish Catholic, man and woman in the entire Province, and in the Republic as well before we'd have beaten the IRA. Yes, I think we could have wiped them out, but the price would have been too high."

"Anyway, it's a fait accompli now; there's no use brooding about what we could have done. There's only one thing really bothers me about them crazy micks."

"What's that, sir?"

The major lowered his voice to an almost conspiratorial tone and said, "God, with all that misplaced idealism, just think where we'd be now, Britain, if they'd been on our side."

"Sir?" The sergeant was visibly confused.

"Ah, you don't remember what Blighty used to be like before the wog invasion, do you? Neither do I properly, I mean, for as long as I can remember, the inner cities have been a dirty shade of brown, but it wasn't always like that; my father told me, God rest him, that back in the fifties, just after the war and the like, you couldn't see a black face most anywhere. Not even in the cities."

"You couldn't, sir?"

"I can remember when all the villages were white: the villages, the market towns, everywhere away from London, Liverpool and the conurbations."

"You can, sir?"

"Yes, it wasn't that long ago. Now you can't walk down any street anywhere without seeing shoals of Negroids, Pakis, and, worst of all, everywhere you look you see these..." the major spat in disgust, "you see these white whores pushing their picaninnies in pushchairs, always with stupid grins on their faces. Another generation and there won't be any whites left at all."

Donovan sat listening to this, transfixed; he wondered what the major had meant by his reference to the IRA. So did the sergeant, "But what has all this got to do with the IRA, sir?"

"God man!" the major snapped, "do you think they'd have stood for all that? They've been killing the British since the last century, the 19th Century, I mean, and we're, well, we're their brothers, and they've been killing us just because we wouldn't let them run the show. What do you think they'd have done if they'd been invaded by fifteen or twenty million nig-nogs? They'd have driven them out, picked up their Armalites and..." he pointed a finger in the shape of a gun, "bang, bang, bang...goodbye Læroy, goodbye Patel. And the politicians too; they wouldn't have stood for any of that one world nonsense, all that brotherhood of man shit."

"I see sir." said the sergeant, then, "It isn't that bad Britain, is it sir?"

"What! You haven't been back there for how long is it?"

"Fifteen years sir, nearly."

The major shook his head sadly, "You won't recognise it; you've only got to walk down the street, I mean any street and you see lovely British girls, or what were once lovely British girls pushing half-chits about in pushchairs and sucking up to niggers like they were God's gift to women. Don't get me wrong mind, I've worked with Negroes, especially that time in Ghana in '93 when we went in to help Rawlings put down the Sons of Nkruma when they had that big

insurgency, and some of them...splendid fellows some of them, but, well, it's not right is it, all this inter-racial screwing."

"Most definitely not, sir."

"It'll soon be compulsory from what I hear. Anyway, I've got nothing ag'inst Nigras, but like I said, Britain is meant to be Britain, not darkest Africa, but it soon will be the rate they're going."

"You were saying sir?"

"Yes, well, they'd never have got away with that in Ireland. Oh, they had a few there when I was there, Chinese, few Pakis too, but the Chinese kept themselves to themselves, and the Asians, well, they ran a few corner shops and restaurants and the like and minded their own business, but if they'd tried to swamp the place with them, the IRA would never have stood for it. They'd have risen up and popped them all off, and they wouldn't have given two fucks about all this abolish racism bullshit we're forever hearing from the British government, they'd have carried on taking them out until there wasn't a black face left in Ireland, crooked politicians, churchmen and all. They don't give a stuff. My God! If only that crazy bunch of micks had been on our side."

Donovan stood up and walked past the two men slowly; there was admiration, almost awe in the major's voice.

"Why they ever hated us so much I'll never know, after all, we're the same as them."

"Don't suppose they like the wogs anymore than us, sir?" The sergeant forced himself to laugh but it was obvious to Donovan that he wasn't really enjoying this rather strange conversation.

"They wouldn't stand for it, mark my word, no red-blooded Irishman would ever allow his country to be invaded by the flotsam and jetsam of Africa and Asia, much less stand by and watch his womenfolk interbreed with them."

Donovan made for the bar: he was confused, disturbed. Less than a week ago he'd been the happiest man in the world: he was returning home in triumph, returning to a home he'd thought he would never see again, the war had been won, and the enemy driven out. Now here he was, an exile from his homeland once more, but this time he knew he could never go back, and he had just been listening to his avowed enemy speaking about the Movement in hushed whispers, with awe and admiration in his voice, and, for the first time in his life, Donovan O'Casey asked himself the question he had once asked his father when he had been barely six years old. Why do we hate the British?

When he'd asked Duane O'Casey that question, his father had sat him on his knee and related to him the history of the Emerald Isle, the potato famine, the Black and Tans, the oppression of the Catholics, the discrimination, the British Army terrorism. He had told Donovan heroic tales the hunger strikers who had starved themselves to death, the heroes who had died on active service. Duane O'Casey had gone on and on about what monsters the British were and how they had to be driven out, even if the end result was that they had to kill every living breathing Englishman, even if they themselves died in the attempt.

Donovan had listened enraptured to all this as a boy, and had accepted all of his father's hate and vituperation without question. Now, thirty years later he was asking himself the same question, and all the answers his father had given him were revealed for what they were: the mindless, blind hatred of the religious\political fanatic. Truly that was what his father had been: an evil, bigoted, hateful man. And that was what he had been; here were two Englishmen, two fellow whites sitting talking about him as though he were their brother, and all he had ever done to them was hate them and kill them, and for what? To give his sister the right to marry a Pakistani, Indian, Sikh, or whatever Mick was. Yes, Mick, he was actually called Mick!

Donovan sat at the bar, a half empty glass of Cognac in his right hand, his left hand tinkering idly with the peanut tray. The barmaid smiled at him, a genuinely friendly smile; he stood up, said to her in fluent French, "I'll have to go; I'll miss my flight," smiled as convincingly as he could, then walked out of the bar.

As he made his way towards the terminal he knew what he had to do; he should have realised the truth before, ten years ago at the very least, but now it was too late, there was no salvation, only, perhaps, redemption. He cast his mind back to the wilderness of Southern Africa and an incident that had happened when he'd been serving under Manfred Kroll, the Mad Kraut as he was known.

He'd spent six months under Kroll, who'd been hired by a multi-national corporation to overthrow Tinga Tshombe, the latest in a seemingly endless line of dictators to seize power in black Africa. This time it was *liberated* Zimbabwe. Apparently a massive deposit of vanadium had been discovered, and Tshombe, who had been installed by "International Finance" in the first place, had got

delusions of grandeur. He didn't understand that he was just a caretaker, and that he had to bow to the real rulers of his country, in Wall Street.

Tshombe, who had succeeded the previous dictator and murderer, Mugabe, had been the darling of the Western media for about eighteen months. The fact that he had butchered at least 30,000 of his own people didn't stop him being hailed as a great liberator and democrat by the controlled press. However, when he decided to double the price of the ore concessions and confiscate US interests, their attitude towards him changed over-night, and it was decided that he would have to go. Kroll, who had been around since the late sixties, was given the task of deposing him.

Manfred Kroll was an oddball, even for a mercenary. He was rumoured to be a member of a highly conspiratorial neo-Nazi secret society: the Black Eagles, a rumour that was partially substantiated by a distinctive tattoo of a black eagle and swastika on his right shoulder.

Like many Germans, Kroll spoke fluent English, but his usage of the language, peppered liberally as it was with Anglo-Saxon, and a Scouse-like accent, gave a curious effect. Donovan was a powerful man, but no matter how big you are, there is always someone bigger, and under Kroll, there served a six foot three inch Irishman, a Protestant who was using the name of Ivan Robertson. Like most of the white mercs, this was undoubtedly a *nom de guerre*. Robertson, it was rumoured, was on the run from the RUC and was thought to have been involved with a Protestant terror gang. When they met in an obscure border town in southern Kenya, he had immediately identified Donovan as a Northern Ireland Catholic, though he'd had no idea who Donovan really was, owing to his thick beard. He took an instant dislike to Donovan. Religion doesn't play a large role in the life of the average mercenary, but Kroll was known to be a German Protestant and to have had connections in the past with Loyalist gangs in the Province.

Robertson began sniping at Donovan almost from the very first moment they met, making sly digs at Catholics and ridiculing the IRA. The dislike was mutual, and under other circumstances, Donovan would have had little compunction about killing Robertson on the spot; the Protestant bigot truly didn't appreciate how lucky he was. At the start of the second week, after they had had their final briefing before leading a raid on one of Tshombe's border post armouries, violence erupted.

The mercenaries had been drinking, something which Donovan rarely did, and which Kroll did his best to discourage, but of the thirty men under his command, all but six were black, and the native mercs, lacking the iron discipline of the professionally trained whites, needed some way to unwind and let off steam. Inevitably, the whites joined in with the drinking session, and, as he consumed more and more alcohol, Robertson began to direct more and more openly abusive remarks at his countrymen. Sensing what was about to happen, Kroll warned him to cool it.

"Easy Fang," he said, using the Loyalist's curious nickname, "We have to fight the enemy the day after tomorrow; best not fight each other today."

The mercs were garrisoned in a large wooden hut, and although they were not segregated, the whites had drifted naturally into a little clique in the far corner. Robertson stood up and walked over to Donovan's bunk where he was lying, doing his best to ignore the provocative bigot by pretending to read a pulp fiction paperback.

"We don't fight each other, do we, Castle?"

Castle was the pseudonym Donovan had been fixed up with by Noraid. As he spoke, he kicked Donovan's bunk. "Eh, yer fuckin' Fenian?"

"Steady Fang," warned Kroll, a shade more firmly this time. Donovan held his tongue.

"The IRA don't fight," Robertson continued, "not men anyway, only schoolkids." This was a reference to an incident which had taken place only a few weeks earlier when, probably by accident, an active service unit had blown up a school bus in Birmingham, only yards from the Rotunda public house where in 1974 twenty-one people had been slain in the notorious Birmingham Six case. Six Irishmen resident in Britain had been wrongfully convicted of the bombing and had spent sixteen years in jail before being freed by the High Court.

This latest IRA outrage, which had killed nine children and maimed thirty more, had been on the front pages of the British tabloids more or less continuously for the past three weeks and had been widely reported throughout the whole of the English-speaking world.

Donovan ignored the remark and tried to continue reading his book, but Robertson was intent on starting something. Raising his hand, he snatched away the book and hurled it to the other side of the hut.

"Eh, I'm talking to you."

Donovan looked up slowly, but his body was already tense, anticipating an attack. "Fang!" shouted Kroll.

"Yer fuckin'!" As he spoke, he bent over Donovan and grabbed him by the scruff of his shirt, tearing it.

Donovan thrust himself to his feet and grabbed Robertson round the wrists, but it was already apparent that even in his drunken state, the Protestant was more than a match for him. He was a big, gorilla of a man.

Fortunately, Kroll was a giant too, and as Donovan struggled with his enemy, the veteran of countless guerrilla campaigns sprang across the hut, seized Robertson from behind in a headlock, and tried to haul him off. Amazingly, not a punch was thrown, but by this time, Robertson was all but foaming at the mouth.

"Let go," said Kroll, "let go off him." Robertson snarled.

"Let go off him, Fang, or I break your fuckink neck."

The black mercs sat watching the incident, some with grins of amusement on their faces, others without comprehension, being already smashed out of their skulls.

"He's a fuckin' Fenian," screamed Robertson, "he's a..."

Kroll chopped him savagely in the liver and the Protestant sagged to the floor. "I said desist!" shouted Kroll, then, "Castle, give me a hand."

Between them, they pulled Robertson to his feet and began dragging him outside; Donovan wasn't quite sure what was going to happen next; he had seen Kroll discipline blacks when they got out of control but he would hardly do the same to Robertson.

When they got outside, Kroll pinned Robertson up against the hut wall and held his head back like an angry mother disciplining a child.

"Now listen to me, both of you, I don't want anymore of this Sectarian garbage. You understand?"

"He's a fuckin' Fenian!" repeated Robertson.

"Not out here, Fang."

"He's a fuckin' IRA murderer. A Fenian!"

"Fang! Listen to me, Fang, out here there are no Fenians and there are no Loyalists. You see that?" He held up his arm and displayed the swastika tattoo. "This is all there are out here, Fang: White Men."

"He's a..."

"Listen Fang, in there is a pack of nigger savages; they hate the White Man, they like to think they are as clever as the White Man even though they never got round to inventing the wheel. They think they can control their destiny, but they are like children; all across Africa it is the same. Wherever they take control there is chaos, that is why we are here, not to fight for *uhuru* or some shit, but to restore order, the White Man's order. While we fight each other, chaos reigns, but if we stand together, we are strong. At home you can hate each other, you can kill each other for all I care, but out here there are no Fenians, there are no Loyalists, there are no Germans: there are only White Men. You understand that, Fang? It is us and them; while we stand together, we are in control, but as soon as we fight each other, the savages take over."

Donovan shook his head and ordered another drink; he wondered what had happened to Kroll. He knew what had happened to Robertson; after the overthrow of Tshombe he'd returned to the Province and, two years later, he'd been shot dead, not by the Provos, but, ironically, by one of his own kind. At the time, that was what Donovan had thought, his own kind, but he realised now that, used in that context, the term was grossly misleading. He was Robertson's own kind, they were not just fellow Irishmen, but fellow whites. But all they had ever done, Catholic and Protestant, was hate each other, and kill each other while Erin and the entire white world, grew steadily darker.

He thought again about Kroll; everything the German had said, made sense, but his analysis of the struggle had been flawed. In Africa they had not been fighting for the White Man. True, they had been fighting to restore the hegemony of a white elite, but this was the monied plutocracy of international finance capitalism. He remembered reading in an obscure conspiratorial publication about how international finance was controlled by Jews. How the Jews were behind everything. This analysis too was flawed, the recent abandonment of Israel by the United States proved that. True, the Jews had wielded enormous power in the struggle against national sovereignty, but although many of the prime movers were Jews and susceptible to influence by the Zionist lobby, the fact that a particular conspirator was a Jew was largely irrelevant.

The struggle against Tshombe had no more been a struggle of white civilisation against black barbarism than it had been a liberation struggle to rid the people of Zimbabwe of their oppressor. All this talk about liberation, freedom and democracy, was bullshit. What they had been fighting for were mineral concessions, oil concessions, land concessions; it was the same the

world over. Whether it was in Central Africa, Southern Africa or Latin America, it all came down to the same thing, raceless capital: money, power and greed. And the struggle in Northern Ireland? Well, as long as those crazy white bastards were killing each other, the international plutocracy didn't give a damn what pretext they used.

Donovan saw all this now, it was crystal clear, like a revealed truth, almost as though he had been looking at the world through dark glasses, or muddied water. He ordered yet another drink as he tried to come to terms with the fact that all his life he had been fighting, not just for a lost cause, but for the wrong cause. The IRA had not taken power in Ireland, and the chances are that there would never be a directly elected IRA government; although support for the Unification had been practically unanimous, there were still too many people opposed to the means if not the ends of the Provos. But even if an IRA government were to be elected tomorrow, it would make no difference. Before he'd left his homeland for the final time, Donovan had read carefully through their Declaration Erin and had learned all about their commitment to creating not just a socialist Ireland, but a just, egalitarian society; the number two plank of their manifesto was to totally oppose and eliminate racism in whatever form it manifested, and by whatever means necessary. But this was not idle talk, Donovan had already seen the fruits of the new Republic. He had seen Irish women taking up with Negroes, half-chits and Asians. God! His own sister...! And where was the IRA? It was standing right behind them, not with an Armalite, ready to cut down the white traitors and the coloured invaders, but with a manifesto pledging to sanction this...genocide!

That was the only word, the Irish race was being phased out. He thought initially that it had been some sort of British conspiracy; there had been no way they could ever have beaten the IRA by force of arms, so perhaps they had resorted to subterfuge. But he dismissed the thought; it was appealing, the same way it was appealing to the far right to interpret all such perversion as the machinations of an international Jewish conspiracy. By choosing one's facts selectively, one could prove whatever one wanted. And however much he hated the British, he realised the fact that, although they had endorsed, promoted, even enforced this madness, they were merely a symptom, not the disease itself.

He'd seen the same thing in America, it was fashionable there to blame the Jews for it because of the high concentrations of Jews in both the media and

the race-mixing industry. However, it was also happening in Israel or New Palestine as it was now known; a while ago he'd read about a riot between Orthodox Jews and, not Palestinians but, incredibly, Nigerians. Apparently there were now nearly as many Nigerians in Jerusalem as there were Jews. The whole world over, it was the same: the white race, indeed, all the higher races were being consciously and deliberately phased out, even China and Japan now had large, unwanted, dark-skinned minorities.

Donovan had thought Ireland would be different; the IRA were like no other liberation movement on Earth. They were predominantly working class for one thing. But now, after decades of bloody struggle, they had turned the Unification on its head. The "liberation" of Ireland from the yoke of British "Imperialism" had turned out to be, not just a disaster, but a phoney struggle from the very start.

He stood up and swayed slightly under the effects of the drink; the barmaid smiled at him, but he ignored her. She was a lovely, native, unlike most of the staff of the bars he had visited these past three days. A lovely, blonde French girl with blue eyes and powder white skin, the archetypal "Aryan" which Hitler had, supposedly, wanted to breed a new, Master Race from. Donovan didn't want to look at the girl, because he knew that she was one of a dying breed. Two, three generations at most, and there would be blonde hair and blue eyes no more - not in France, not in Britain, not even in Ireland. He walked out of the bar and back to the apartment he had hired the evening of his arrival.

He had taken the room for a week, but he wouldn't need it for that long. In any case, it was doubtful if he could remain at liberty for more than a few days, because as soon as he had given the secret agent at the airport the slip, an all-points bulletin would have been put out for him and a "warrant of deportation" issued by the Minister of the Interior. That was a joke: this was a piece of legislation that had been introduced throughout the EEC in 1995, ostensibly to keep out illegal immigrants, but a year later the European Court of Human Rights had ruled it racist and therefore unconstitutional, but it had remained on the European statutebook because it could be used against suspected terrorists, and racists.

And there was another, equally disturbing aspect to what he had seen in the new, United Ireland. Everywhere he had been in his brief stay, he had been conscious of, not just a police presence, but watching eyes. There had been

cameras in the street, in shops, in bars, even in public toilets; you couldn't empty your bladder unless someone was watching you.

Again, his mind flashed back, not to Southern Africa, but to his arrest shortly before leaving Erin for the final time. He thought about the inspector who'd come into his cell, and of the things he'd said. "...now you've got your United Ireland...what do you think of it? Was it worth all the blood you spilled?" And he had naïvely replied that Ireland had to be free. But the inspector's analysis of the new, *free* United Ireland had been incisive and accurate.

So free you could be arrested on sight, searched and locked up for a week without any redress; so free you couldn't hire an Irishman to work in your family business unless you hired a nigger as well, by Executive Decree. So free you had spies watching you all the time: at the airport, in the drinking club, even in the lavatory. So free that the state decided who you could work with or for, what organisations you could or could not join, what you could and could not write...the list went on and on. And everywhere in Europe it was the same, by public consent. Over the years, the IRA had bombed, maimed and killed in the name of freedom, now they had won their freedom but at what a terrible price.

There came a knock at the door, soft, more like a mouse than a man; Donovan walked over to it and, turning the handle, pulled it open. He stood face to face with a slightly, frizzy-haired octaroon, who, in the dim hall light, could just about pass for white.

"O'Casey?" he asked, in a Scouse accent.

"That's right," replied Donovan, "did you bring it?"

"Sure did," the man grinned.

"Come in."

"Ta," he grinned again broadly, as he crossed the threshold.

"*The* O'Casey?"

"Yes." Donovan closed the door behind him and led his visitor over to the bedside cabinet.

"I used to do quite a bit of business with the Provos one time; hey man, you're a regular hero."

The scene was slightly unreal, here he was, holed up in a grotty hole in the red light district of Paris, buying a gun off a grinning picanniny with a Liverpool accent. But, he had grown used to unreal scenes over the past few

years, none more so than when he'd met his new family for the first and last time.

The frogs know you're here?" he asked. It was ironic that it was considered perfectly legitimate to refer a French man as a 'frog', but anyone who referred to a non-white as a 'wog' would be instantly condemned and set the media off on a campaign of screaming hysteria.

"Yes," Donovan replied, not caring, either about security or small talk.

"What do they think?"

"They don't like it, but it's not up to them, is it? France is a free country."

"Yeah, like Ireland." He grinned yet again. "Man, them Provos sure showed the British a thing or two; I still remember when they got the Queen." He held up his right hand and outstretched his left arm in imitation of a rifle and made several popping noises followed by a low boom, which, Donovan supposed, was meant to be a crude imitation of a bomb going off. This man obviously hated the British as much as most British and Irish people now hated their own white skins. Donovan took the money out of the bedside cabinet and counted out ten thousand dollars in large denomination notes.

He'd got the money from an old IRA sleeper who lived just outside Paris; it sounded a lot to pay for a handgun, but the brief hyperinflation of 1994 had devalued all world currencies so much that at today's rates it was the equivalent of a month's salary. He passed the money to the octaroon.

"Ta," he said, pocketing it, then, drawing a leather pouch from down the front of his trousers, he handed it to Donovan. "Just like you wanted, small but powerful."

"Is it loaded?"

"Uh, uh," he fished in his pocket and took out a dozen shells.

"Never carry a loaded gun down the front of me trousers; don't want to end up singing in the choir."

The octaroon laughed stupidly at his feeble joke, but Donovan wasn't in a laughing mood. "Aren't you from England?" he asked.

"Yeah, St Helens."

"And you support the IRA?"

"Always have done."

"What if they'd blown you up?" he asked as he began loading the gun.

The octaroon shrugged his shoulders and pursed his lips, "That's life."

"Life?"

"Man, people get killed everyday."

"You're too right," said Donovan, and as he spoke he pointed the gun at his surprised guest and pulled the trigger. It went off with a muffled bang, two seconds later followed a heavy thud as twelve stone of dead meat hit the linoleum, and a thick patch of blood and brains was splashed over the mildewed wallpaper.

Detective Sergeant Wallman arrived in a chauffeur-driven squad car and was escorted by the regional Interpol liaison officer as he climbed the steps to the apartment.

"I hope this not spoil your breakfast," said his escort in imperfect English. "If it is that bastard, it'll give me an appetite."

"They arrived at the top of the stairs where they were greeted by a local uniformed officer. The man recognised the Interpol officer and nodded to him. The two men stood face to face for a minute, babbled something in French, then the door was opened and Wallman shown into the room.

"After you."

"You're too kind," he said.

Walking into the room, he found himself standing over two corpses: one of a light skinned black, the other of a stockily-built white man who was unrecognisable because his face had been blown away. Sergeant Wallman knelt over the white man's corpse and grimaced. The man had put the muzzle in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

"Do you think it is him?" asked the Interpol man.

Sergeant Wallman reached out and picked up the man's left hand. He examined it briefly and nodded with grim satisfaction, "Yes, he lost the tip of his pinky when he was a kid. Slammed it in a car door or something."

"Are you positive?"

"Yes, that's good enough for me." He looked up and asked somewhat surprised, "Haven't you got a scanner?"

"Yes, but we have no prints."

"Oh."

With a fingerprint scanner they'd be able to identify the dead man positively within a matter of minutes, but there were still problems between Britain, Ireland and France, despite the 1998 Marseille Convention. It would take a while for New Scotland Yard to obtain authorisation to transmit the data, even with a case as serious as this. He stood up, "Bloody red tape!"

"Pardon?" Wallman shook his head and stepped over the corpses to the bed. He picked up a faded black and white photograph of a nondescript middle aged man. It had been torn in half. "Any idea who this is?" he asked.

"We think it's O'Casey's father."

"What do you think happened here?"

The official shrugged, "Lover's tiff, perhaps?"

"You think O'Casey was queer?"

"Did he ever have girlfriends?"

Wallman was shocked, he had been monitoring O'Casey's movements for the past six years and the thought had never occurred to him.

"We know he was a nigger lover, anyway," continued the French Interpol official. "All these IRA scum are; they trained with the ANC."

Wallman shook his head, as he remembered with disgust the sight of IRA killers standing shoulder to shoulder with the murdering black scum who now controlled South Africa.

"We think sonny boy here had a few drinks, started to row with your O'Casey character, took the pees out of his old man", he indicated the photo, "then O'Casey shot him dead."

"And afterwards turned the gun on himself?"

He nodded. "All very neat. Too neat. I hope we don't get the blame."

"We have no witnesses, but we are not looking for anyone else."

Wallman stood over O'Casey's corpse and resisted the temptation to spit on it.

"There is a note," the Interpol man continued.

Wallman stood to attention, "A note?"

His escort walked over to the door, opened it, and called in the man who was standing guard. "The suicide note," he asked in English, "what did it say?"

"Forgive me, Erin," the man said.

They both looked at Wallman, "Mean anything to you?"

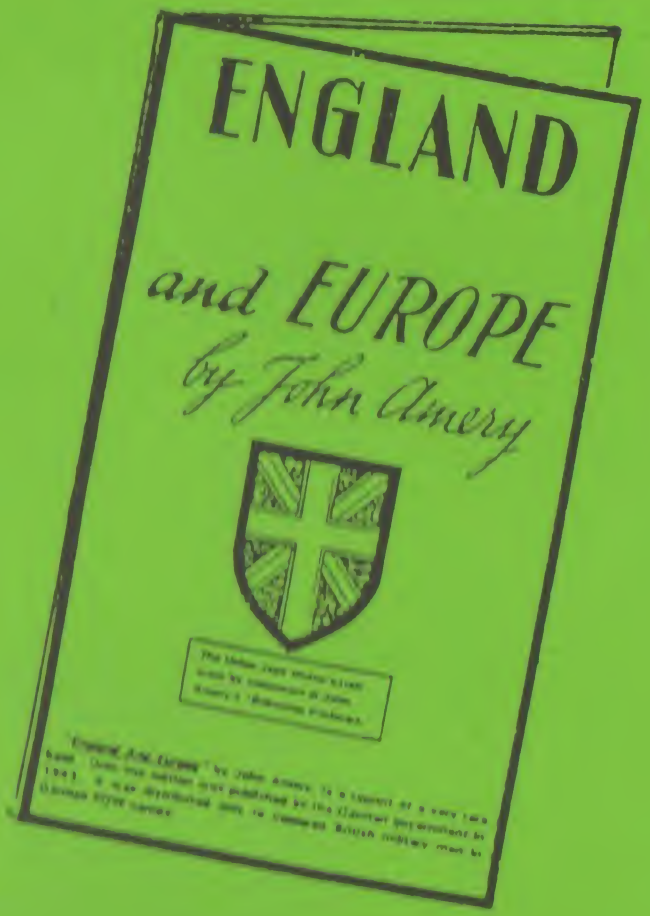
The Interpol officer went to shut the door, but the policeman was digging in his pocket for something. Seeing this, he held the door ajar. The man took out his notebook, tore out a page and passed it to the plainclothes man, who passed it on to Wallman. Wallman looked at it, sniffed, and read it aloud. "Forgive me Erin. Forgive my father too. We didn't understand."

"Meaningless gibberish," said the Frenchman.

Wallman nodded, then turned away from the corpse.

For the serious student of modern history

HISTORICAL REPRINT SERIES



£3.50

Steven Books,
10 Lincoln Way,
Enfield,
Middlesex
EN1 1TE

"***England and Europe***" by John Amery is a reprint of a very rare book. Only one edition was published by the German government in 1943. It was distributed only to captured British military men in German POW camps.

A fascinating insight into the mind of a man who was later to die on the gallows for the very ideas expressed in this book.

"The pen is mightier than the sword"

It is the not too distant future, perhaps. Donovan O'Casey is an old IRA fighter, returning to his native land after 15 years exile. Ireland is united following the final British climbdown. His return will be triumphal; and it should be the fulfilment of his lifetime's dreams ..... but soon after he lands on the sacred soil of his homeland a nightmare begins to slowly unfold .....

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SINEAD BAIRD is the mother of two daughters. She was born in Co. Mayo, Ireland. She regards herself as a patriot, not only in the nationalist sense but also in the European and racial sense of the word. Her father was well known in the "troubles" and was much admired by his fellow countrymen. Her sister, Bernadette, who is in Holy Orders, achieved some notoriety as a result of an article she wrote for *The League Review* (the League of St George journal) during the 70s.

Indications are that this new writer will be extremely popular with people holding a wide range of political views. She is working on two more books which are expected to make their appearance within the next few years.

ISBN 1-899435-01-8

Distributed by Steven Books, 10 Lincoln Way, Enfield, Middlesex EN1 1TE England